

CHAPTER THREE

FUTURE POPULATION

Before continuing, several terms need clarification. One such term is "population projection" which too often is misinterpreted, specifically in regard to its validity. A population projection is only as valid as the assumptions upon which it is based. A projection based upon past trends certainly is not valid if, at the time when the projection is made, a new plant is being established that will double employment. Neither is a projection valid, which was founded on the premise of a new plant locating in the future. At best, for a small, sparsely populated area, a projection should be construed as only a guide designating the general direction and magnitude of growth expected. It certainly should not be considered a prediction of what the exact population will be at a future date.

In Hertford County the population has been projected into the future based upon a careful evaluation of past trends and present conditions. Chart 8 shows the expected population for various years. The heavy line indicates the growth from 1900 to 1960 which almost follows a straight line growth trend over the entire period. The growth from 1900 to 1960 occurred during all types of economic conditions, e.g., wars, depressions, recessions, business booms, and a fluctuating agricultural economy. Of course, the population of Hertford County was substantially influenced by these economic conditions and has continued to grow in essentially the same manner over the entire period. In all probability, unless there is a tremendous influx or exodus of industry, the county population will continue to grow along the same gradual trend line (See Chart 8). The thin line on the chart is only a statistical trend line and is a straight line projection. Based on this expected growth, Hertford County should plan for approximately 24,800 people by 1976 and about 26,200 people by 1986. The percentage of increase in each period would be approximately 6.2 percent and 5.8 percent, respectively.